

A Fragmentary Statue from Caesarea Maritima*

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A few years ago a fragmentary marble statue (height — 17.5 cm.) was found in the sea, northward of the theater of Caesarea. The fragment which was covered all over with seaweed, was cleaned by Mr. Aharon Wegman, Director of the Caesarea Maritima Museum in Sdoh-Yam. After the removal of the layer of seaweed, two feet poised on a tortoise were revealed. These feet, broken off at the ankles, have the toes badly damaged; only two nails of the right foot, which is in a better condition than the left one, can still clearly be observed. The tortoise stands on the right side of a broken circular base. The details of its shell are drawn in reddish-brown lines; its head is missing. On the left side of the base there is a broken square column with a hole in the right-hand side of the fracture. Traces of rust can still be seen in the hole, which contained a clamp, which joined two pieces of marble together.

The identification of the missing figure poses a problem. In the Greek and Roman world the tortoise is connected with Aegina, as well as with mythological figures and historical personalities,¹ which sometimes are also depicted in the visual arts. Among these only the images of Aphrodite, Hermes, and Apollo have some common features with the statue here discussed. Aphrodite Urania is mentioned by Pausanias, who tells us about a lost chryselephantine statue from Elis. In this statue, created by Pheidias, the goddess was shown standing with one foot upon a tortoise:

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1 Gossen-Steier, "Schildkröte", *RE* II, A.1 (1921) 427–433; J.M. C. Toynbee, *Animals in Roman Life and Art* (London 1973) 217, 220–223.

"...The goddess in the temple they call Heavenly; she is of ivory and gold, the work of Pheidias, and she stands with one foot upon a tortoise... The meaning of the tortoise ... I leave to those who care to guess."²

Pausanias does not explain the meaning of this uncommon attribute of Aphrodite. And since he left it to the observers to guess, one can conclude that it was either unknown or very well known to the ancient Greeks. Plutarch, discussing the same statue, interprets the tortoise as meaning that it is suitable for married women to stay indoors, as well as to be silent.³

"Beside the statue of Athena Pheidias placed the serpent and in Elis beside the statue of Aphrodite the tortoise, to indicate that maidens need watching, and that for married women staying at home and silence is becoming"⁴

A comparison between Pausanias' description of the statue of Aphrodite Urania and the fragmentary statue from Caesarea indicates, that the two statues differ in their postures. But, other comparable examples of Archaic mirror-supports,⁵ show the goddess in exactly the same posture as the figure from Caesarea Maritima; standing with both feet on the tortoise-shell. It should be mentioned that these mirror-supports (as well as others with nude females) can also be indentified as maidens or hetaerae, who served as temple-assitants of Aphrodite.⁶ Yet this does not contradict the probable identification of the fragment from Caesarea with Aphrodite, since the religious connection of these Archaic statuettes with her cult seems obvious.

Two other possibilities for the identification of the Caesarean missing figure, are those of Hermes and Apollo. Both gods are connected with the tortoise. The well known myth is repeated with slight variations by several

2 Pausanias 6. 25,1.

3 Plutarch, *Moralia*, 142D.

4 Plutarch, *Moralia*, 381E.

5 S. Reinach, *Répertoire de la statuaire grècque et romaine*, II (Paris 1931) 330, nr. 8, p. 364, nr. 7; L.O.K. Congdon, *Caryatid Mirrors of Ancient Greece* (Mainz 1981) pls. 2 nr. 6a-c, 10 nr. 14a-b.

6 L.O.K. Congdon, op.cit., 15; G.M.A. Richter, "An Archaic Greek Mirror," *AJA* 42 (1938) 343.

ancient authors.⁷ It is told that Hermes invented the lyre, which he made of a tortoise-shell, and then he gave it to Apollo in exchange for his stolen cattle. It is also stated by Pausanias that in the temple of Apollo Lykeios in Argos, there stood a statue of Hermes with a tortoise which he had caught with the intention of making a lyre. Pausanias does not describe this statue:

“within the temple is a statue of Ladas ... and one of Hermes with a tortoise which he has caught to make a lyre”⁸

Another statue of Hermes with a tortoise was probably placed in this gods' temple at Megalopolis, in Arcadia. We are told by Pausanias that this temple had been demolished, and that nothing remained of it but a stone tortoise.⁹ The extant Greek and Roman statues of a male figure accompanied by a tortoise and identified as Hermes or as Apollo, represent the gods in a variety of postures: standing or sitting, with one foot on the tortoise, or with the tortoise close to or between their feet.¹⁰ But Apollo is the only one who is shown standing with both feet on the tortoise on several mirror-supports of the Late Archaic period.¹¹

To sum up: the written sources and archaeological finds mentioned above seem to indicate that the images of Aphrodite, Hermes, and Apollo accompanied by a tortoise were known since the Archaic period. Furthermore, it seems possible to conclude that the statue from Caesarea Maritima, which is a Roman copy or an adaptation of a Greek original, may be identified with either Aphrodite or Apollo, as both these gods are shown standing with two feet upon a tortoise.

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- 7 Homeric Hymn to Hermes; Sch. Pind. Pythion hypothesis (A.B. Drachmann, ed.: *Scholia Vetera in Pindari Carmina*, II [Amsterdam 1967] 1); Sophocles, *Fragments of the Trækers* (A.C. Pearson, ed. and notes, *The Fragments of Sophocles*, I [Amsterdam 1963], pp. 224–270); Apollodorus 3.10.2.
- 8 Pausanias 2. 19.7.
- 9 Pausanias 8. 30.6.
- 10 S. Reinach, op. cit., I (Paris 1930) 253, pl. 494 nr. 959; II (Paris 1931) 156 nr. 3, p. 170 nr. 6, p. 171 nr. 1, p. 174 nr. 4; IV (Paris 1913) 97 nr. 5; J.M.C. Toynbee, *Art in Roman Britain* (London 1963) pl. 31.; C. Vermeule, *Greek Sculpture and Roman Taste*, (Michigan 1977) 97, fig. 87.
- 11 S. Reinach, op. cit. II (Paris 1931) 89 nrs. 3, 4, p. 90 nr. 5; J. Charbonneaux, *Greek Bronzes* (London 1962) pl. XX₂.



